

up, powder track, steep and rough as it is. I think that you might gain the valley beyond. Then, at the prince, and tell him how we fare."

"But, my fair lord, how can we hope to reach the horses?" asked Norbury.

"We cannot go round to them, for they would be upon ye ere ye could come to them. Think ye that ye have heart enough to clamber down this cliff?"

"There is one here. It is but one hundred feet long, and for the rest ye must trust to God and to your fingers. Can you try it, Alayne?"

"With all my heart, my dear lord, but how can I leave you in such a strait?"

"Nay, it is to serve me that ye go. And you, Norbury?"

The silent squire said nothing, but he took up the rope, and, having examined it, he tied one end firmly round a projecting rock. Then he came off his breastplate, thigh pieces, and greaves, while Alayne followed his example.

"Tell Chandos, or Calverley, or Knolles, should the prince have gone forward," cried Sir Nigel. "Now may I fall upon ye, for ye are brave and worthy men."

It was, indeed, a task which might make the heart of the bravest sink within him. The thin cord dangled from the face of the brown cliff seemed from above to reach little more than half-way down. Beyond stretched the rugged rock, wet and dripping with rain, and there thrusting out from it, but little sign of ridge or foothold. Far below the jagged points of the boulders bristled up, dark and menacing. Norbury tugged thrice with all his strength upon the cord, and then lowered himself over the edge, while a hundred anxious faces peered over at him as he swung himself down. Twice he stretched out his foot, and twice he failed to reach the point at which he aimed, but even as he swung himself for a third effort a stone from a sling buzzed like a wasp from amid the rocks and struck him full upon his feet slipped, and in an instant he was a crushed and mangled corpse upon the sharp ridges beneath him.

"If I have no better fortune," said Alayne, leading Sir Nigel aside. "I pray you, my dear lord, that you will give my humble service to the Lady Maude, and tell her that I was that I was a true servant and most unworthy cavalier."

The old knight said no word, but he put a hand on either shoulder, and kissed his forehead, with the tears shining in his eyes. Alayne sprang to the rope, and sliding swiftly down, soon found himself at its extremity. From above it seemed that the rope and cliff were all-nigh touch, and now, when swinging a hundred feet down, the squire found that he could scarce reach the face of the rock with his foot, and that it was as smooth as glass, with no resting-place where a mouse could stand. Some three feet lower, however, his eye lit upon a long jagged crack which he clung to, and this he must reach if he would save not only his own poor life, but that of the eight-score men above him. Yet it was madness to spring for that narrow slit of light, though the wet, smooth rock to cling to. He swung for a moment, full of thought, and even as he hung there another of the hellish stones came through his curls and struck a chip from the face of the cliff. Up he clambered a few feet, drew up the loose end after him, ensnaring his belt, held on with knee and with elbow while he spliced the long tough leathern belt to the end of the cord, then lowering himself as far as he could, he swung backwards and forwards until his hand reached the crack, then he left the rope and clung to the face of the cliff. Another stone struck him on the side, and he heard a sound like a breaking stick, with a keen stinging pain which shot through his chest. Yet it was no time to think of pain or ache. There was his hand and his eight-score comrades, and they must be plucked from the jaws of death. On he clambered, with his hand shuffling down the long sloping crack, sometimes bearing all his weight upon his arms, at others finding some small shelf or tuft on which to rest his foot. Would he never pass over that fifty feet? He dared not look down, and could but grope slowly onwards, his face to the cliff, his fingers clutching, his feet scraping and feeling for a support. Every vein and crack and mottling of that face of rock remained forever stamped upon his memory. At last, however, his foot came upon a broad resting-place, and he returned to a cleft in the rock. Thank God! he had reached the highest of those fatal pinnacles upon which his comrades had fallen. Quickly now he sprang from rock to rock until his feet were on the ground, and he had his hand stretched out for the horses' reins, when a sling-stone struck him on the head, and he dropped senseless upon the ground.

An evil blow it was for Alayne, but a worse one still for him who struck it. The Spanish slinger, seeing the youth lie slain, and judging from his dress that he was no common man, rushed forward to plunder him, knowing well that the bowman above him had expended their last shaft. He was still in the act, however, from his victim's side when John upon the cliff above plucked up a huge boulder, and, pointing it for an instant, dropped it with fatal aim upon the slinger beneath him. It struck upon his shoulder, and hurled him, crushing and scattering to his ground, while Alayne, recalled to his senses by those shrill cries in his ears, staggered on to his feet, and gazed wildly about him. His eyes fell upon the horses, grazing upon the scanty pasture, and in an instant all had come back to him—his mission, his comrades, the need for haste. He was dizzy, sick, faint, but he must not die, and he must not tarry. For his life meant many lives that day. In an instant he was in his saddle and sprung down the valley. Loud rang the swift charger's hoofs over rock and reef, while the fire flew from the stroke of iron, and the loose stones showered up behind him. But his head was whirling round, the blood was gushing from his brow, his temple, his mouth. Ever keener and sharper was the deadly pain which shot like red-hot arrow through his side. He felt that his eye was glazing, his senses slipping from him, his grasp upon the reins relaxing. Then with one mighty effort, he called up all his strength for a single minute. Stooping down, he loosened the stirrup-leads, bound his knees tightly to his saddle flaps, twisted his hands in the bridle, and then, putting the gallant horse's head for the mountain path, he dashed the spurs in and fell forward fighting with his face buried in the coarse, black mane.

Little could he ever remember of that wild ride. Half-conscious, but ever with the idea thought beating in his mind, he coasted the horse onwards, rushing swiftly down steep ravines, over huge boulders, along the edges of black abysses. Dim memories he had of beetling cliffs, of a group of huts with wondrous faces at the doors, of foaming, chattering water, and of a bristling mountain beeches. Once, ere he had ridden far, he heard behind him three deep, sudden shouts, which told him that his comrades had set their faces to the foe once more. Then all was blank, until he woke to find kindly blue English eyes peering down upon him and to hear the blessed sound of his country's speech. They were but a foraging party—a hundred archers and as many men at arms—but their leader was Sir Hugh Calverley, and he was not a man to bide idle when good blows were to be had not three leagues from him. A scout was sent flying with a message to the camp, and Sir Hugh, with his two hundred men, then descended off to the rescue. With them went Alayne, still bound to his saddle, still dripping with blood, and swooning and recovering, and swooning once again. On they rode, and on, until, at last, topping a ridge, they looked down upon the fatal valley. Alas! and alas! for the sight that met their eyes.

There, beneath them, was the blood-bathed hill, and from the highest pinnacle there streamed the yellow and white banner with the lions and the towers of the

royal house of Castile. Up the long slope rushed ranks and ranks of men—excited, shouting, with waving pennons and brandished arms. Over the whole summit were dense throngs of knights, with no enemy that could be seen to face them, save only that at one corner of the plateau an eddy and swirl amid the crowded masses seemed to show that all resistance was not yet at an end. At the sight a deep groan of rage and of despair went up from the baffled rescuers, and, springing on their horses, they clattered down the long and winding path which led to the valley beneath.

But they were too late to avenge, as they had been too late to save. Long ere they could gain the level ground, the Spaniards, seeing them riding swiftly amid the rocks, and being ignorant of their numbers, drew off from the captured hill, and, having secured their few prisoners, rode slowly in a long column, with drum-beating and cannon-clashing, out of the valley. Their rear ranks were already passing out of sight ere the newcomers were urging their panting, foaming horses up the slope which had been the scene of that long-drawn and bloody fight.

And a fearsome sight it was that met their eyes! Across the lower end by the dense heap of men and horses where the first arrow-storm had burst, above, the bodies of the dead and the dying—French, Spanish, and Aragonese—lay thick and thicker, until they covered the cold ground two and three deep in one dreadful tangle of slaughter. Above them lay the Englishmen in their lines, even as they had stood, and higher yet upon the plateau a wild medley of the dead of all nations, where the last deadly grapple had left them. In the further corner, under the shadow of a great rock, there crouched seven bowmen, with great John in the center of them—all wounded, weary, and in the blood-stained weapons waving and their voices ringing a welcome to their countrymen. Alayne rode across to John, while Sir Hugh Calverley followed close behind him.

"By Saint George!" cried Sir Hugh. "I have never seen signs of so stern a fight, and I am right glad that we have been in time to save you."

"You have saved more than us," said John, pointing to the banner which leaned against the rock behind him.

"You have done nobly," cried the old free companion, gazing with a soldier's admiration at the huge frame and bold face of the archer. "But why is it, my good fellow, that you sit upon this man?"

"By the rood! I had forgot him," John answered, rising and dragging from under him no less a person than the Spanish Caballero, Don Diego Alvarez. "This man, my fair lord, means to be a new house, ten courses, one built—if it be but a little over a griststone, and I know not what besides, so that I thought it well to sit upon him, lest he should take a fancy to leave me."

"Tell me, John," cried Alayne faintly, "where is my dear lord, Sir Nigel Loring?"

"He is dead, I fear. I saw them throw his body across a horse and ride away with it, but I fear the life had gone from him."

"Now were worth me! And where is Sir Ayllward?"

"He sprang upon a riderless horse and rode after Sir Nigel to save him. I saw them throng around him, and he is either taken or slain."

"Blow the bugles!" cried Sir Hugh, with a scowling brow.

"We must back to camp, and ere three days I trust that we may see these Spaniards again. I would have ye all in my company."

"We are of the White Company, my fair lord," said John.

"Nay, the White Company is here disbanded," answered Sir Hugh solemnly, looking round him at the lines of silent figures. "Look to the brave squire, for I fear he will never see the sun rise again."

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was a bright morning four months after that fatal fight in the Spanish barranca. The sun was yet low in the heaven, and the red cows stood in the long shadow of the olms, chewing the end and gazing with great vacant eyes at two horsemen who were spurring it down the long white road which dipped and curved across the back to where the towers and pinnacles beneath the flat-topped hill marked the old town of Winchester.

Of the riders, one was young, graceful and fair, clad in plain doublet and hose of blue Brussels cloth, which served to show his active and well-knit figure. He rode with lips compressed and anxious face, as one who has much care upon his mind. Young as he was, and peaceful as was his dress, the dainty golden spurs which twinkled upon his heels proclaimed his knighthood, while a long seam upon his brow and a scar upon his temple gave a manly grace to his refined and delicate countenance. His comrade was a large, red-headed man upon a great black horse, with a huge canvas bag slung from his saddle-bow. His broad, brown face was lighted by a continual smile, and he looked slowly from side to side with eyes which twinkled and shone with delight. Well might John rejoice, for was he not Don Diego's five thousand crowns ransoming his knee, and above all was he not himself squire now to Sir Alayne Edrickson, the young Soeman of Minstead, lately knighted by the sword of the Black Prince himself, and esteemed by the whole army as one of the most rising of the soldiers of England.

For the last soldier of the Company had been told throughout Christendom where ever a brave deed of arms was loved, and honors had flowed in upon the few who had survived it. For two months Alayne had wandered betwixt death and life, with

a broken rib and a shattered head; yet youth and strength and a cleanly life were all upon his side, and he awoke from his long delirium to find that the war which had been waged at Navarretta and that the prince had himself heard the tale of his ride for succor and had come in person to his bedside to touch his shoulder with his sword and to insure that so brave and true a man should die, if he could not live, within the order of chivalry. The instant that he could set foot to ground Alayne had started in search of his lord, but no word could he hear of him, dead or alive, and he had come home now sad-hearted, in the hope of raising money upon his estates and so starting upon his quest once more. Landing at London, he had hurried on with a mind full of care, for he had heard no word from Hampshire since the short note which had announced his brother's death.

"By the rood!" cried John, looking around him excitedly. "Where have we seen since we left such noble cows, such fleecy sheep, grass so green, or a man so drunk as yonder rogue who lies in the gap of the hedge?"

"Ah, John," Alayne answered wearily. "It is well for you, but I never thought that my home-coming would be so sad a one. My heart is heavy for my dear lord and for Ayllward, and I know not how I may break the news to the Lady Mary and to the Lady Maude, if they have not yet had tidings of it."

John gave a groan which made the horses shy. "It is indeed a black business," said he. "But he not sad, for I shall give half these crowns to my old mother, and half will I add to the money which you may have, and so we shall buy that yellow cog wherein we sailed to Bordeaux, and in it we shall go forth and seek Sir Nigel."

Alayne smiled, but shook his head. "Were he alive we should have had word of him ere now," said he. "But what is this town before us?"

"Why, it is Romsey!" cried John. "See the tower of the old gray church, and the long stretch of the nunnery."

Ere Alayne could answer there swung round the curve of the road a lady's carriage drawn by three horses abreast with a postilion upon the outer one. Within there sat a stout and elderly lady in a pink cotehardie, leaning back among a pile of cushions. None could seem more safe and secure and at her ease than this lady, and yet here also was a symbol of human life, for in an instant, even as Alayne reined aside to let the carriage pass, a wheel flew out from among its fellows, and over it toppled with the horses plunging, the postilion shouting, and the lady screaming from within. In an instant Alayne and John were on foot, and had lifted her forth all

and body superior had had their will, it was but fitting that some pomp and show should mark the glad occasion.

But there were plots and plans when love and youth and nature are above all, for fate are arrayed against them. Who is this travel-stained youth who dares to ride so madly through the lines of staring burghers? Why does he ding himself from his horse and stare so strangely about him? See how he has rushed through the dense-herd, thrust aside his sister Agatha, scattered the two-and-twenty damozels who sang so sweetly—and he stands before the novice with his hands outstretched, and his face shining, and the light of love in his gray eyes. Her foot is on the very lintel of the church, and yet he bars the way—and she, she thinks no more of the wise words and holy rule of the lady abbess, but she hath given a sobbing cry and hath fallen forward with his arms around her drooping body and her wet cheek upon his breast. A sorry sight this for the gaunt abbess, an ill lesson too for the stainless two-and-twenty who have ever been taught that the way of nature is the way of sin. But Maude and Alayne cared little for this. A dash, cold air comes out from the black arch before them. Without, the sun shines bright and the birds are singing amid the ivy on the drooping beeches. Their choice is made, and they turn away hand-in-hand, with their backs to the darkness and their faces to the light.

Very quiet was the wedding in the old priory church at Christchurch, where Father Christopher read the service, and there were few to see save Lady Loring and John, and a dozen women from the castle. The Lady of Twynham had dropped and pined for weary months, so that her face was harsher and less comely than before, yet she still hoped on, for her lord had come through so many dangers that she could scarce believe that he might be stricken down at last. It had been her wish to start for Spain and to search for him, but Alayne had persuaded her to let him go in her place. There was much to look after, now that the lands of Minstead were joined to those of Twynham, and Alayne had promised her that if she would but bide with his wife he would never come back to Hampshire again until he had gained some news, good or ill of her lord and lover.

The yellow eve was engaged, with Goodwin Hawtayne in command, and a month after the wedding Alayne rode down to Bucklershard to see if she had come round yet from Southampton. On the way he passed the fishing village of Pitt's Deep, and marked that a little covey or brig was looking off the land as though about to anchor there. On his way back, as he rode towards the village, he saw that she had indeed anchored, and that many boats were round her, bearing cargo to the shore.

A low-shot from Pitt's Deep there was an inn a little back from the road, very large and wide-spaced, with a great green bush hanging upon a pole from one of the upper windows. At this window, he marked, as he rode up, that a man was seated who appeared to be craning his neck in his direction. Alayne was still looking up to him, when a woman came rushing from the open door of the inn, and made as though she would climb a tree, looking back the while with a laughing face. Wondering what these things might mean, Alayne tied his horse and was walking amid the trees toward the inn, when there shot from the entrance a second woman who made also for the inn. Alayne at her heels came a burly, brown-faced man, who leaned against the door post and laughed loudly with his hand to his side. "Ah, ma belles!" he cried, and is it thus you treat me? Ah, ma petites! I swear by these fingerbones that I would not hurt a hair of your pretty heads; but I have been among the black pines, and, by my hit! it does me good to look at your English cheeks. Come, drink a stoup of muscadine with me, mes enges, for my heart is warm to be among ye again."

At the sight of the man, Alayne had stood staring, but at the sound of his voice such a thrill of joy bubbled up in his heart that he did not bite his lips to keep himself from shouting outright. But a deeper pleasure yet was in store. Even as he looked, the window above was pushed outwards, and the voice of the man whom he had seen there came out from it. "Ayllward," cried the voice, "I have seen just now a very worthy person come down the road, though my eyes could scarce discern whether he carried coat-armor, or pray you to wait upon him and tell him that a very humble knight of England abides here, so that if he be in need of advancement, or have any small vow upon his soul, or desire to evade his lady, I may help him to accomplish it."

Ayllward at this order came forward amid the trees, and in an instant the two men were clinging in each other's arms, laughing and shouting and patting each other in their delight; while Sir Nigel came running with his sword, under the impression that some bickering had broken out, only to embrace and be embraced himself, until all three were hoarse with their questions and outcries and congratulations.

On their journey home through the woods Alayne learnt their wondrous story; how, when Sir Nigel came to his senses, he with his fellow-captive had been hurried to the coast, and conveyed by sea to their captor's castle; how upon the way they had been taken by a Barbary rover, and how they exchanged their light captivity for a seat on a galley bench and hard labor at the pirate's oars; how, in the port at Barbary, Sir Nigel had slain the Moorish captain, and had swum with Ayllward to a small coaster which they had taken, and so made their way to England with a rich cargo to reward them for their toils. All this Alayne listened to, until the dark grey of Twynham towered above them in the gloaming, and they saw the red sun lying athwart the rippling Avon. No need to speak of the glad heart at Twynham Castle that night, nor of the rich offerings from out that Moorish cargo which found their way to the chapel of Father Christopher.

Sir Nigel Loring lived for many years, full of honor and laden with every blessing. He rode no more to the wars, but he found his way to every jousting within thirty miles, and the Hampshire youth treasured it as the highest honor when a word of praise fell from him as to their management of their horses, or their breaking of their lances. So he lived and so he died, the most revered and the happiest man in all his native shire.

For Sir Alayne Edrickson and for his beautiful bride the future had also brought but what a good. Twice he fought in France, and came back each time laden with honors. A high place at court was given to him, and he spent many years at Windsor under the second Richard and the fourth Henry—where he received the honor of the brave soldier, a true-hearted gentleman, and a great lover and patron of every art and science which redines or ennobles life.

As to John, he took unto himself a village maid and settled in Lyndhurst, where his five thousand crowns made him the richest franklin for many miles around. For many years he drank his ale every night at the "Pied Merlin," which was now kept by his friend Ayllward, who had wedded the good widow to whom he had committed the money in that fashion. So they lived, these men, in their own, busy, cheery fashion—true and rough, but honest, kindly and rude. Let us thank God if we have outgrown their vices. Let us pray to God that we may ever hold their virtues.

THE END.

**COOL GARMENTS FOR COMFORT.**

**The Shirtwaist the Leader—White the Coolest Color.**

Bertha Browning.

The month of August means a good many warm days and those who stay at home as well as the more fortunate individuals who enjoy the coolness of some resort need cool apparel. It has always been true everywhere that white proved much less warm beneath a scorching sun than a darker tone and the American woman has adopted it as her summer wardrobe this year. Everything which can be of white will be found much cooler and pleasanter to look upon than other colors and this means every article of dress. It is a scientific fact that white is the coolest, as black is the warmest color.

The fashion makers have supplied womankind with real summer dress this year. No more hot collars and fitted waists for summer wear but instead, neck wear of sheerest lace or material and loose comfortable-looking blouses suitable for all ages. The shirt waist is the real monarch of the field for general wear and this takes a very wide variety of forms, from the dressy and fussy waist elaborately embroidered and inset with lace to the real negligee shirt with its low collar and half-sleeves. The latter is a new comer this season and is favored by the girl who enjoys any sort of out-of-door sport. It is made of madras, linen, lawn and silk and prettily trimmed with flat collar, cuffs and tie of the same or a contrasting color.

Beside these shirts, there are very attractive little white flannel suits which may be worn on any outing, for tennis, or driving which consist of shirt waist and skirt in simple design. White appears in everything with black as a smart contrast. Black is promised a great prominence in the early fall but it seems to have anticipated its popularity to such an extent that it is gracing all smart costumes. When a suit is of white the hat and gloves are of black as well as the foot-gear. Numerous black and white malinette ruches and boas are being worn and look especially well on women, not too young.

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